United Nations E/CN.3/2010/15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2009

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-first session
23-26 February 2010
Item 3 (l) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion: development indicators

Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session (see E/2009/24), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators on development indicators. The report elaborates on the work conducted by the Expert Group since its last report to the fortieth session (E/CN.3/2009/16). The report further presents an assessment of data availability to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission is invited to comment on progress made by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators and its future direction of work.

* E/CN.3/2010/1.

09-64323 (E) 080110

Please recycle

Report on the indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals

I. Introduction

1. The present report outlines the progress made to address the concerns raised by the Statistical Commission in relation to the production of Millennium Development Goals indicators and the ability of countries to undertake their own national monitoring. It also describes the activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare the 2009 progress reports and related outputs on Millennium Development Goals to inform the public and policymakers on progress towards achieving the Goals.

2. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators and the Statistics Division have continued to work to implement the recommendations contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 on strengthening statistical capacity, and the requests by the Statistical Commission on the improvement of data and indicators to monitor the Goals at its fortieth session. In particular, the work focused on the following areas: (a) improving data availability and quality for the monitoring of the Goals; (b) capacity-building efforts to strengthen national data production for the monitoring of the Goals; (c) work to reconcile national and international data sets on the Goals; (d) improving coordination of national monitoring of the Goals; (e) training efforts on Millennium Development Goals indicators and finalizing the new manual on the production of the indicators at the national level; (f) providing further training on subnational data production and analysis for monitoring of the Goals at the local level; and (g) improving data coverage for Millennium Development Goals monitoring and reporting on data availability for their indicators.

II. Improving data quality for Millennium Development Goal indicators

A. Regional workshops on Millennium Development Goals monitoring

3. In 2009, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group has continued to implement the recommendations made by its countries' representatives to improve coordination within national statistical systems and their reporting mechanisms to the international agencies, in an effort to reduce data gaps and data discrepancies between national and international sources.

4. Based on countries' recommendations, the Statistics Division has engaged in a series of workshops to bring together representatives of national statistical systems and experts from the international agencies responsible for the compilation of the international data series for the global monitoring with the aim of reviewing existing data gaps and differences between national and international data sets; identifying the underlying causes; and recommending appropriate actions to resolve these gaps and inconsistencies. The series of workshops, which started in 2008 with a training programme held in Kampala, in May 2008, has continued with a similar programme conducted for Asian countries, in Bangkok, in January 2009. The workshop, hosted

by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), brought together national statisticians and representatives of line ministries from over 20 countries. Experts from several international agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, from the DevInfo group and from bilateral donor agencies, and experts from national statistical offices and other government agencies participated. A special session on subnational monitoring was also organized, with the assistance of the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines. Representatives of the Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board trained participants on the use of techniques for small area estimates.

5. The third workshop is to be held from 7 to 10 December for countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region and northern Africa. Representatives from national statistical systems and from UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics, and ILO will participate. The methodology of the workshop will be the same as the two previous ones. A session on the use of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) for data and metadata exchange for Millennium Development Goals indicators will also be held.

6. A fourth workshop for Europe and the Central Asia region is scheduled, as a joint effort by the Statistics Division of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Statistics Division, to be held in the second quarter of 2010.

B. Activities of members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for the improvement of data for Millennium Development Goals indicators

7. An important element of the work of the Group is to define strategies and coordinate activities to improve the capacity of countries to produce the indicators and conduct national monitoring. All members of the Group have embarked on activities to improve the availability and quality of data for Millennium Development Goals indicators by improving access to the metadata and guidelines for the production of the Goals indicators and providing training tools and programmes to national statisticians. Following are a few examples of the initiatives undertaken by the international agencies during 2009.

8. ILO, as the lead United Nations agency on Millennium Development Goals employment indicators, has produced a guide on the Goals employment indicators covering definitions, data sources, calculations and analysis of the new indicators.[1] Furthermore, workshops have been organized that support country-level analysis of the indicators.[2] The first seminar, on the theme "Strengthening labour market information to monitor progress on decent work in Africa", held in Addis Ababa in July 2009, covered country analysis of Millennium Development Goals employment

[1] *Guide to the new Millennium Development Goals Employment Indicators: including the full set of Decent Work Indicators* (Geneva, ILO, June 2009); http://www.ilo.org/trends.

[2] On the proposed set of Decent Work Indicators, see: http://www.ilo.org/integration/lang--en/index.htm.

indicators: a second technical workshop is being organized for the French-speaking countries in Africa, in Dakar, from 7 to 11 December 2009.

9. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has provided technical assistance to countries to improve estimates of food available for human consumption and national and subnational food security statistics. FAO has also engaged in continuous efforts to improve the quantity and the quality of the estimation of the water withdrawal and water use.

10. In 2009, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics conducted four regional workshops with national statisticians as part of efforts to review International Standard Classification of Education mappings; resolve practical issues concerning data submissions to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics; communicate international measurement methodologies and new developments; and address Education for All/Millennium Development Goals indicators and emerging policy issues. The regional workshops covered the following groups of countries: the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa, the Gulf countries, and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics also conducted 13 national workshops, which provided more detailed and intensive training to groups of national statisticians and ministry of education.

11. UNICEF supports the generation of data through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, which produce data on more than 20 Millennium Development Goals indicators. The fourth round of the Surveys was launched in 2009, and data collection has begun in several countries. It is expected that by the end of 2011 over 40 countries will have conducted Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. In the process of rolling out Multiple Indicator Survey 4, various workshops have been held and will continue to be organized. In 2009 country teams from 75 countries participated in these workshops. The Surveys programme produces documentation on household survey methodology that can be used for both the implementation of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other household surveys. UNICEF also co-organizes regional workshops to comprehensively review the mortality estimation methodology and mobilizes teams to work directly with countries where these estimations have been controversial.

12. WHO regional offices and technical programmes have convened, in collaboration with key partners, inter-country workshops on improving the availability and the quality of data as part of country annual health sector reviews, including for Millennium Development Goals reporting. WHO has also developed an Indicator and Metadata Registry to help ensure harmonization of indicator definitions, promote availability of metadata, and facilitate data and metadata exchange using SDMX standards.

13. The secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change supports capacity-building in developing countries (non-Annex I Parties to the Convention) on the preparation of national inventories of greenhouse gases. Such inventories are a foundation for the calculation of emission-related indicators, including the indicators under goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals. Since November 2008, a training workshop was conducted for countries of South-East Asia, and two in-country workshops for the Philippines and Thailand, respectively.

14. International Telecommunication Union (ITU), through its work in the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, an initiative to improve the

availability and the quality of information and communications technology (ICT) data and indicators, is helping countries to improve the data for the Millennium Development Goals indicators under target 8F. In 2009, ITU published the *Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals* and carried out a number of capacity-building courses aimed at training national statistical offices in the collection of official ICT data. The Partnership has also reviewed and updated its "Core List of ICT Indicators" to help guide countries in their data collection.[3]

15. Improvements in data coverage, interpretation and dissemination have been regularly introduced by the Geneva Group working on Millennium Development Goals trade indicators (ITC/United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization). To disseminate these results to the wider public, the Geneva Group has developed a website offering disaggregated data at the country level and various options for regional groupings as well as analytical documents (see http://www.mdg-trade.org/). Current research and development efforts also include the coverage of preferential market access treatments offered by emerging countries to least developed countries.

16. Regional commissions are also very active in assisting countries to resolve inconsistencies between national and international data sets and address data gaps. In 2009, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized the first meeting of the Working Group on the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and two Expert Group Meetings, and produced several documents on data gaps and differences between national and international sources.[4] ESCWA regularly performs quality checks on country data on Millennium Development Goals and follows up through correspondence and advisory technical missions. It also provides technical support to countries for the establishment of national Millennium Development Goals databases, including through DevInfo workshops aimed at encouraging collaboration and the exchange of data in the statistical system, and the harmonization of definitions and methodologies at the subnational level. In 2009, ESCAP and the ESCAP Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SI) conducted workshops and training on Millennium Development Goals indicators, including a training to promote use of administrative data sources for compiling Millennium Development Goals indicators. ESCAP also provided training for the production of Millennium Development Goals indicators to officials of the Government of Myanmar. During the past year, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) organized the first Millennium Development Goals Expert Group Meeting with the five Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan, an important opportunity to learn about current capacity to produce estimates for the Millennium Development Goals indicators and explore which areas require further assistance. To improve availability and use of data related to development in the region, including the Millennium Development Goals, ECE is also enhancing the current regional Millennium Development Goals database on the countries of Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, the southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

[3] For more information on the Partnership, see: http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/partnership/.

[4] See also http://www.cepal.org/mdg.

C. Preparation of the new version of the handbook *Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals: Definitions, Rationale, Concepts and Sources*[5]

17. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group has continued its efforts to ensure that countries have access to the necessary tools to monitor the Millennium Development Goals at the national level. In particular, the Group has produced a revised version of the handbook on Millennium Development Goals indicators. The new handbook will be better tailored to the specific country needs for monitoring and cover all the new indicators being introduced after the first edition was issued in 2003.

18. The handbook focuses on methods that countries can use to produce the Millennium Development Goals indicators at the national level, based on existing national sources. These methods might differ in some cases from those applied by the international agencies in the production of international data series. The difference with the metadata presented in the Millennium Development Goals indicators website, referring to the methodology and sources used by the international agencies in compiling the international data series, will be clarified in the handbook.

19. The handbook is not intended as a source of information on data collection, but rather on the different ways to produce the indicators from existing national sources. It also provides specific guidelines on how to address gender equality issues and to include in the Millennium Development Goals monitoring sub-groups of the population, such as refugees. Links will be included to documentations and handbooks on data-collection methods relevant to the indicators in question.

20. The handbook is being produced in both print and online versions. The online version will include additional elements, such as examples of calculation of indicators and information on alternative and supplementary indicators to be used in different settings, depending on national priorities and circumstances. The online version will also be regularly updated to include new information whenever it becomes available, add new examples when necessary and update links to useful sites. The handbook will be translated in the six official languages of the United Nations. The release of the online version is planned for December 2009. The printed version is expected for spring 2010. After its release, effective and extensive dissemination of the handbook will be conducted, including through regional workshops and events of the Statistics Division.

III. Improving coordination of Millennium Development Goals reporting and data and metadata exchange

21. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group has continued its work to assist countries in the improvement of coordination of national Millennium Development Goals reporting and monitoring. At its last meeting, in October 2009, the Group made a number of recommendations related to strengthening the role of the national

[5] United Nations Development Group, *Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals: Definitions, Rationale, Concepts and Sources*, UNDG (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.XVII.18).

statistics office in the national statistical system and improving the tools of communication between the national statistics office and line ministers, through the creation of central Millennium Development Goals databases and the use of standards for data exchange, such as SDMX. It also recommended the following: (a) the promotion of national legislation to support the role of national statistics offices as the coordinating body of the national statistical system; and (b) establishing proper channels of communication between the national and the international levels, including having a focal point for the transmission of data at both the national and the international levels.

A. National Millennium Development Goals databases

22. The group recommended the establishment of national Millennium Development Goals databases as official repositories for all Millennium Development Goals data, recognizing that a well functioning Millennium Development Goals database can encourage coordination among national data producers and facilitate data dissemination.

23. A session focusing on different database applications was organized at the October 2009 meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, for representatives of national statistics offices to review and discuss the main features of various available software and database platforms, and the latest developments in database technology. The group agreed on a number of useful features that should always be part of Millennium Development Goals database platforms, including tools for producing charts and maps and for cross-tabulating indicators; and ways to store and export metadata along with data. Also, to promote data dissemination, they agreed that databases should be available online and allow exports in standard data and metadata exchange formats. As more national statistics offices develop competent information technology units, their preference goes for open source database applications, which can be manipulated by the national statistics offices and adapted to their own needs.

B. Implementation of SDMX for data and metadata exchange on Millennium Development Goals indicators

24. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group has devoted increased attention to ensure the achievement of the desired levels of consistency and transparency in presenting data and metadata for international monitoring. In this respect, the Group agreed that the adoption of the common platform for data exchange, SDMX, would be a good technical solution to facilitate data and metadata exchange and improve transparency in data reporting.

25. The task team on SDMX, established in 2007, has completed the development of the data structure for Millennium Development Goals indicators and created a registry for use by the agencies. An expert review of the data structure definition for Millennium Development Goals indicators was also conducted, which produced some useful technical recommendations for its improvement. The review also highlighted that the data structure definition prepared by the SDMX-Millennium Development Goals Task Team has a reasonable number of dimensions, allows

reporting of data at different levels of aggregation and is easy to integrate into software tools.

26. Given that the SDMX data structure definition for Millennium Development Goals indicators and the Registry are now well established, the Task Team has extended the discussion to country experts with a view to encouraging the use of this platform by national statistical systems and with the ultimate objective of implementing SDMX to facilitate data exchange across countries, within regions and subregions, and between national and international statistical systems.

27. An expert group meeting with representatives from national statistical systems was held in Geneva on 23 October 2009. The conclusions of the group were that countries are very interested in the adoption of SDMX on Millennium Development Goals indicators and that, in order to proceed further with the implementation of the plans, the following steps are required:

(a) the provision by the international partners of training on conceptual and technical aspects of the SDMX standards;

(b) the issuing of specific guidelines for the implementation of SDMX on Millennium Development Goals indicators in countries;

(c) initiating projects in national statistics offices to implement the standards, including defining the objectives, resources, time frame, staff involved and experts required.

IV. Recommendations by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for further work

28. Countries and international agencies in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, and the Statistics Division, in its role as coordinator of the Group, have continued the discussion to identify best strategies and made recommendations for future work to improve the coordination of Millennium Development Goals monitoring in countries, including sharing experiences and best practices on coordination; establishing a central repository system on Millennium Development Goals indicators at the country level and making it available online; implementing SDMX in both national statistics offices and line ministries; promoting national legislation to strengthen and support the role of national statistics offices in the coordination of statistical activities; establishing a focal point on Millennium Development Goals for the transmission of data at both the national and international levels; carrying out regular assessments of national coordination and communication mechanisms with international statistical agencies; and improving coordination among international agencies on data collection from countries to avoid duplicating requests.

29. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group also made recommendations for strengthening training initiatives at the national and regional levels, including on the new Millennium Development Goals framework; techniques to regularly monitor progress at the local level (subnational), including small area estimation and rolling census; techniques to produce estimations when there are data gaps (e.g., estimates combining data sources); assessment of data quality; and the establishment of databases and SDMX implementation at the country level.

30. Participants also recommended wide dissemination and use of the new handbook on Millennium Development Goals indicators, as soon as it is released, and for regional commissions to be more proactive to promote the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group among countries and to support the ongoing dialogue between countries and international agencies to reconcile international and national data.

V. Assessment of data availability on Millennium Development Goals indicators

31. The regular reporting on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals continues to reveal that many countries still do not have the capacity to produce, analyse and disseminate all the necessary data. A full assessment of countries' capacity to produce the official Millennium Development Goals indicators is not easy to conduct, as it would require a comprehensive review of data availability and quality in each and every country. The extent of the availability of data in the Millennium Development Goals indicator database, however, provides a very good approximation of the level of production existing in countries and their capacity to report to the international system.

32. Since 2006, the Statistics Division has monitored the availability and nature of the data provided by the international agencies for the global monitoring and contained in the Millennium Development Goals database.[6] This assessment has served as an indirect measure of countries' capacity to produce the necessary data and of the extent to which the regional aggregates used for the global monitoring reflect the actual situation around the world. When considering the country coverage in the database, it is important, however, to bear in mind that not all data produced at the national level reach the international statistical system, mainly because of the inadequacy of existing reporting mechanisms.

33. As detailed above in this report, the focus of the work by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group has been on the improvement of coordination of statistical systems within countries and reporting to the international agencies. This, together with the many initiatives launched by the international partners to strengthen statistical capacity in countries, has begun to yield results. Increasingly, data production in countries have become aligned with internationally agreed recommendations and standards, and international agencies have developed a better understanding of data availability in countries and how to work with national experts in developing and applying the needed methodology for the production and estimation of the indicators.

34. Although still far from the coverage one would wish to obtain for both the international and national monitoring, the availability of data in the Millennium Development Goals database largely reflects these improvements. Table 1 of the report presents the availability of data for the assessment of trends, measured as the number of countries that have data before and after 2000 (at least one data point) in the database as of 2003, 2006 and 2009.[7] The progress in the number of countries

[6] See http://mdgs.un.org.

[7] A brief description of the methodology for the assessment of data availability in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database is presented as annex 1. The complete results of the analysis are available on the website of the Statistical Commission at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2010.htm.

with trend data for the majority of the indicators is evident. The number of countries with trend data for 16 to 22 indicators increased from 0 in 2003, to 84 in 2006, and 93 in 2009. Meanwhile, the number of countries with trend data for only 0-5 indicators has gone down from 47 in 2003, to only 11 in 2009.

Table 1
Number of countries and territories in the Millennium Development Goals indicator database, by number of indicators for which trend analysis is possible[a]

	Number of countries with data in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database[b]					
	As of July 2003		*As of July 2006*		*As of July 2009*	
Number of indicators for which trend analysis is possible[b]	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*
0-5	47	29	15	9	11	7
6-10	66	40	22	13	14	9
11-15	50	31	42	26	45	28
16-22	0	0	84	52	93	57
Total	**163**	**100**	**163**	**100**	**163**	**100**

[a] The criteria used to determine whether trend analysis is possible for a given indicator is that the country has data for the given indicator for at least one point before 2000 and one after 2000.
[b] It refers to the indicators for which the reporting is done on all developing countries; the calculation for the indicators on donor countries is presented separately.

35. When the criterion to assess data availability is relaxed to include all countries with data for at least two points in time, irrespective of whether they are before or after 2000, the improvement is even more evident, with 118 countries in 2009 displaying data for two points in time for 16 to 22 indicators, up from only 4 countries in 2003.

Table 2
Number of countries and territories by number of indicators with at least two data points[a]

	Number of countries with data in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database[b]					
	As of July 2003		*As of July 2006*		*As of July 2009*	
Number of indicators with at least two data points[a]	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*	*Number of countries*	*Percentage of countries*
0-5	31	19	9	6	9	6
6-10	49	30	19	12	8	5
11-15	79	48	31	19	28	17
16-22	4	2	104	64	118	72
Total	**163**	**100**	**163**	**100**	**163**	**100**

[a] The two points in time considered in this table refer to any time, irrespective of whether they are before or after 2000.
[b] It refers to the indicators for which the reporting is done on all developing countries; the calculation for the indicators on donor countries is presented separately.

36. A more comprehensive assessment of current data availability can be conducted on the totality of the indicators for the latest version of the database.[8] Table 3 presents a full description of data series contained in the database as of July 2009, including for those indicators that are related to specific groups of countries, such as landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and donor countries.

Table 3
Number of countries and territories in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database, by number of indicators for which trend analysis is possible, as of July 2009[a]

	Countries	
Number of indicators	*Number*	*Percentage*
Indicators reported for developing regions		
0-10	11	7
11-20	19	12
21-30	43	26
31-40	51	31
41-55	39	24
Total	**163**	**100**
Indicators related to official development assistance (ODA) from the 22 donor countries		
Data are available for all 22 donor countries on indicators:		
Net ODA, total and to least developed countries, as percentage donors' gross national income (GNI) and ODA that is untied, from 1990 to 2007		
ODA to basic social services, from 1996 to 2007		
ODA to help build trade capacity, from 2001 to 2006		
Data are available for 11 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries on indicator:		
Agricultural support estimates, from 1990 to 2007		
Indicators related to the 31 landlocked developing countries		
Data are available for all 31 landlocked developing countries on indicator:		
ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes, from 1990 to 2007		
Indicators related to the 52 small island developing States		
Data are available for 35 small island developing States on indicator:		
ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes, from 1990 to 2007		

[8] The same analysis cannot be done over time because of changes introduced in the list of indicators and format of the database, which is why the assessment of the improvement since 2003 is done on a smaller sample of indicators.

Indicators related to 40 eligible heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC)
Data are available for all 40 HIPC initiative countries on indicators:
Number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision and completion points, from 2000 to 2009
Debt relief committed under the HIPC initiative and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) updated every year until 2009

[a] The criteria used to determine whether trend analysis is possible for a given indicator is that the country has data for the given indicator for at least one point before 2000 and one after 2000.

37. One important aspect to be considered in the assessment of data availability in internationally compiled data series is that data provided by countries are often adjusted to allow international comparability. Moreover, when data in countries are not available or may be derived from different sources, international agencies often produce estimates. In 2006, in order to ensure full transparency and clearly show the origin of each data point in the database, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group introduced a new tool, based on colour coding of each cell in the database. The coding represents, for each data point of the data series presented in the database, and for every country and every year considered, the level of adjustment of the original country data performed by the agency to obtain the desired level of international comparability or to resolve data quality issues. Country representatives and international agencies in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group agreed on the categories to be used to represent the nature of the data, as detailed in table 4 of the report.

38. The assessment shown in table 4 indicates the nature of the data for the majority of countries in the database: an indicator is defined as being of a given category when the majority of the countries have data falling into that category. For a country to be designated as falling into a given category for the specific indicators, the majority of data points have to be in that category.[9] The majority of indicators are based on data from countries with no or minimum adjustment. There are, however, still 11 indicators for which the majority of data points are estimated by the international agency and 4 indicators for which the availability of data is so scarce that most data points are derived through a model based on variables other than the one the indicator is measuring. A complete list of indicators under each category and related data availability is presented in annex 2 to the present report.

[9] The category "country data" is an exception: when the country has data in the "country data" category for at least one data point, it is classified as "country data" for that specific indicator, following the rationale that in that case, the country has the capacity to produce the indicator in adherence to international standards.

Table 4
Millennium Development Goals indicators by nature of the data available in the majority of countries in the Millennium Development Goals database, as of July 2009

	Millennium Development Goals indicators	
Nature of data[a]	*Number*	*Percentage*
Indicators reported for developing regions		
Country data	27	49
Country adjusted	4	7
Estimated	11	20
Modelled	4	7
Global monitoring data	6	11
Not available	3	5
Total	**55**	**100**
Indicators related to ODA from the 22 donor countries		
Country data	6	100
Indicator related to the 31 landlocked developing countries		
Country data	1	100
Indicator related to the 52 small island developing States		
Country data	1	100
Indicators related to 40 eligible HIPC initiative countries		
Global monitoring data	3	100

[a] The coding of the nature of the data is as follows:
Country data: the figure is the one produced and disseminated by the country (including data adjusted by the country to meet international standards).
Country adjusted: the figure is the one produced and provided by the country, but adjusted by the international agency for international comparability — that is to comply with internationally agreed standards, definitions and classifications (age group, International Standard Classification of Education, etc.).
Estimated: the figure is estimated by the international agency, when corresponding country data on a specific year or set of years is not available, or when multiple sources exist, or when there are issues of data quality. Estimates are based on national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources but on the same variable being estimated.
Modelled: the figure is modelled by the agency when there is a complete lack of data on the variable being estimated. The model is based on a set of covariates -- other variables for which data are available and that can explain the phenomenon.
Global monitoring data: the figure is regularly produced by the designated agency for the global monitoring, based on country data. However, there is no corresponding figure at the country level, because the indicator is defined for international monitoring only (example: population below $1 a day).
Not available: the nature of data is unknown or was not provided.

39. Finally, for data to be relevant to Millennium Development Goals monitoring, they have to be recent enough to inform users on what the current situation is, and to provide an assessment of the impact of new policies and initiatives and of rapid economic changes. This has become particularly relevant in these times of global

crises that have seriously undermined some of the initial progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Recent data are also indispensable to understand how far countries are from achieving the Millennium Development Goals, what resources are needed, and what interventions need to be put in place.

Table 5
Number of indicators by latest available year in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database, as of July 2009

Latest available year	*Number of indicators*	*Percentage of indicators*
Indicators reported for developing regions		
1990-1999	0	0
2000-2004	5	9
2005-2006	25	45
2007	22	40
2008	2	4
2009	1	2
Indicators related to ODA from the 22 donor countries		
2007	6	100
Indicators related to the 31 landlocked developing countries		
2007	1	100
Indicators related to the 52 small island developing States		
2007	1	100
Indicators related to 40 eligible HIPC initiative countries		
2009	3	100

40. Table 5 presents the number of indicators in the Millennium Development Goals database by the most recent year for which data are available in the majority of countries. For the large majority of indicators data are for 2005 or a later year. Also, for all of the indicators, the most recent year is 2000 or later. However, only less than half of the indicators are available for 2007 or earlier years. It is evident that the timeliness of Millennium Development Goals data is still not sufficient to understand where countries and regions currently stand in terms of the implementation of the goals and, even more importantly, the information is not recent enough to understand the impact of the global food and economic crises of the past two years, whose effects on the lives of the poor are not yet fully understood and reflected in the existing data.

VI. Outputs by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group in 2009

41. As every year, the Statistics Division prepared the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*,[10] presenting the most updated data on the official Millennium Development Goals indicators and the assessment of trends, as provided by the

[10] *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.I.12).

partner agencies. The report was published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and launched in July 2009 by the Secretary-General at the opening of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. The data and analysis presented in the report were also used to inform the political debate on Millennium Development Goals of the General Assembly.

42. The assessment of progress based on regional aggregates was also presented in the Millennium Development Goals: 2009 Progress Chart, a colour-coded chart, presenting an assessment of regions and subregions that are on- or off-track to achieve the goals.

43. The Statistics Division also compiled the data and analysis provided by the partner agencies on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, to inform the 2009 report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization and to prepare the statistical annex that was presented as an annex to the report.[11] The Statistics Division also continues to maintain the website and database of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals indicators.

44. In September 2009, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the DevInfo group, issued the fifth edition of MDGInfo, an off-line version of the database, using the DevInfo platform.

VII. Conclusions and way forward

45. **The Commission may wish to take note of the work done by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and the Statistics Division during 2009 in implementing the recommendations contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 and the requests by the Statistical Commission, at its fortieth session, on the improvement of data and indicators to monitor the Millennium Development Goals.**

46. **The Commission may also wish to comment on the proposed next steps:**

(a) **Continuing the work to reconcile the national and international data and to improve coordination of Millennium Development Goals monitoring in countries;**

(b) **Improving training tools available to countries, including through wide distribution of the new Millennium Development Goals handbook and the provision of training on methodological issues in the production of Millennium Development Goals indicators;**

(c) **Continuing to provide training to countries on the production of data and indicators on Millennium Development Goals at the subnational level;**

(d) **Providing technical assistance and training to countries that wish to adopt the SDMX standards on Millennium Development Goals indicators for exchanging data and metadata among national statistical offices and line ministries and with international agencies.**

[11] See A/64/1.

Annex I

Assessment of data availability in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database

1. A total of 68 indicators were included in the analysis of data availability (see list A). For the assessment of progress in the availability of data over time (between 2003 and 2009), the analysis is conducted on a subgroup of 22 key indicators. Considering a smaller set of indicators has the advantage that the assessment can be conducted over a longer period of time, providing a clearer indication of how data production has evolved since the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals began. The analysis is based on the information available at the time the Millennium Development Goals indicators database is regularly updated — July of each year.

2. Of the 68 indicators, 55 are relevant to all 163 developing countries included in the database,[a] while the remaining refer to specific groups of countries as follows:

(a) Six indicators relevant to 22 OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries;

(b) One indicator relevant to the 31 landlocked developing countries;

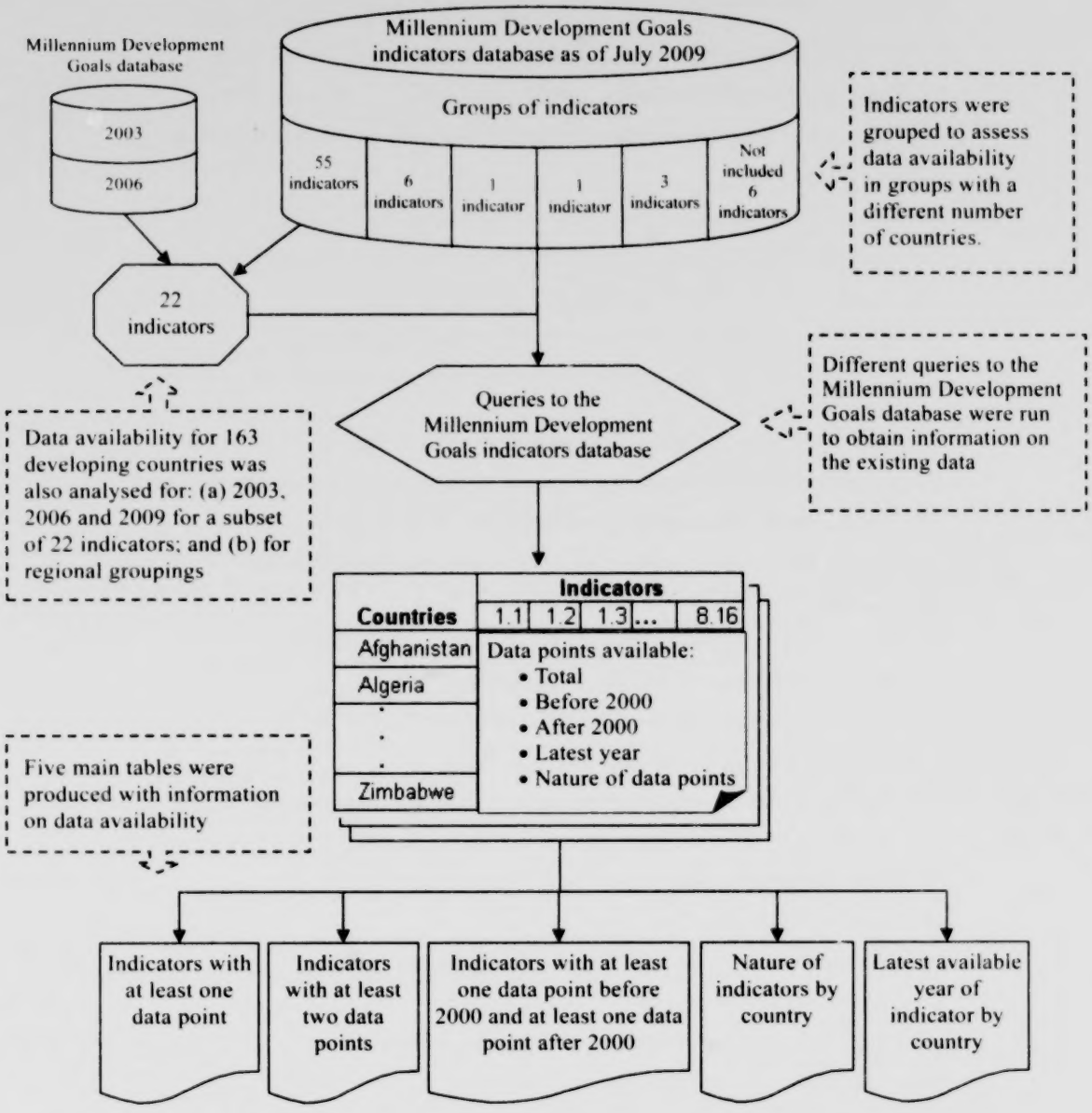
(c) One indicator relevant to the 52 small island developing States;

(d) Three indicators relevant to the 40 HIPC initiative countries.

3. The remaining six indicators were not included because data are not reported (two indicators) or the indicators refer to an aggregated level (four indicators).

4. For the 55 indicators presented for the 163 developing countries and territories, a separate analysis of data availability by regional groupings was also conducted.

The following chart describes the steps followed to process the information:


Millennium Development Goals database
2003
2006
Millennium Development Goals indicators database as of July 2009
Groups of indicators
55 indicators
6 indicators
1 indicator
1 indicator
3 indicators
Not included 6 indicators
Indicators were grouped to assess data availability in groups with a different number of countries.
22 indicators
Queries to the Millennium Development Goals indicators database
Different queries to the Millennium Development Goals database were run to obtain information on the existing data
Data availability for 163 developing countries was also analysed for: (a) 2003, 2006 and 2009 for a subset of 22 indicators; and (b) for regional groupings
Countries
Indicators
1.1
1.2
1.3
...
8.16
Afghanistan
Algeria
Zimbabwe
Data points available:
• Total
• Before 2000
• After 2000
• Latest year
• Nature of data points
Five main tables were produced with information on data availability
Indicators with at least one data point
Indicators with at least two data points
Indicators with at least one data point before 2000 and at least one data point after 2000
Nature of indicators by country
Latest available year of indicator by country

List A. Millennium Development Goals indicators

Indicators included in the assessment of data availability

Indicators reported for developing regions:

1.1 Proportion of population below $1 purchasing power potential (PPP) per day

1.2 Poverty gap ratio

1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption

1.4 Growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) per person employed

1.5 Employment-to-population ratio

1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day

1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment

1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-5 years of age[b]

1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education[b]

2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary[b]

2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men[b]

3.1 Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Gender Parity Index in primary-level enrolment[b]

Gender Parity Index in secondary-level enrolment[b]

Gender Parity Index in tertiary-level enrolment[b]

3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector[b]

3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament[b]

4.1 Under-5 mortality rate

4.2 Infant mortality rate

4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles

5.1 Maternal mortality ratio

5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate[b]

5.4 Adolescent birth rate

5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)

Antenatal care coverage, at least one visit

Antenatal care coverage, at least four visits

5.6 Unmet need for family planning

6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years[b]

6.2 Condom use at the last high-risk sex

Condom use at last high-risk sex, 15-24 years old, men

Condom use at last high-risk sex, 15-24 years old, women

Condom use to overall contraceptive use among currently married women 15-49 years old[b]

6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS

Men 15-24 years old with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS

Women 15-24 years old with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS

6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years

6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs

6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets

6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate antimalarial drugs

6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis

Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population

Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population[b]

Tuberculosis death rate per 100,000 population[b]

6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS)

Tuberculosis detection rate under DOTS[b]

Tuberculosis treatment success rate under DOTS[b]

7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest

7.2 Carbon dioxide emissions, total, per capita and per $1 GDP (PPP)[b]

7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances

Consumption of all ozone-depleting substances in ozone depletion potential (ODP) metric tons

Consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in ODP metric tons[b]

7.5 Proportion of total water resources used

7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected

7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source[b]

7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility[b]

7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums

8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population[b]

8.15 Cellular subscribers per 100 population

8.16 Internet users per 100 population[b]

Indicators related to ODA from the 22 donor countries

8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income

Net ODA as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income

Net ODA to least developed countries as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income

8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)

8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied

8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product

8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

Indicators related to the 31 landlocked developing countries

8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes

Indicators related to the 52 small island developing States

8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes

Indicators related to 40 eligible HIPC initiative countries

8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)

8.11 Debt relief committed under the HIPC initiative and MDRI

Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative, cumulative

Debt relief delivered in full under MDRI, cumulative

Indicators not included in the assessment of data availability

Indicators with data reported only at the regional or global level

7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits

7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction

8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty

8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries

Indicators with no data reported

6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria

8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

[a] See http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Data/Regional/Groupings.htm for a list of developing countries.

[b] Series included in the assessment over time of data availability (for 2003, 2006 and 2009).

Annex 2

Data availability in the Millennium Development Goals indicators database, by coverage and nature of data

Millennium Development Goals indicators	*Countries with at least 1 data point*		*Countries with at least 2 data points*		*Countries with at least 1 data point before 2000 and 1 data point after 2000*		*Nature of data[a]*
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	
Indicators reported for developing regions							
C = country data							
1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment	89	55	62	38	52	32	C
1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-5 years of age	116	71	98	60	87	53	C
2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education	142	87	126	77	108	66	C
2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary	121	74	104	64	69	42	C
2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men	119	73	99	61	72	44	C
3.1 Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education							
Gender Parity Index in primary-level enrolment	147	90	142	87	132	81	C
Gender Parity Index in secondary-level enrolment	146	90	140	86	127	78	C
Gender Parity Index in tertiary-level enrolment	125	77	115	71	86	53	C
3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	155	95	108	66	81	50	C
3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	134	82	134	82	126	77	C
5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate	126	77	102	63	87	53	C
5.4 Adolescent birth rate	162	99	158	97	150	92	C
5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)							
Antenatal care coverage, at least four visits	65	40	14	9	4	2	C
5.6 Unmet need for family planning	77	47	56	34	51	31	C
6.2 Condom use at the last high-risk sex							
Condom use at last high-risk sex, 15-24 years old, men	41	25	21	13	13	8	C
Condom use at last high-risk sex, 15-24 years old, women	52	32	24	15	14	9	C
Condom use to overall contraceptive use among currently married women 15-49 years old	123	75	97	60	82	50	C
6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS							
Men 15-24 years old with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS	43	26	12	7	2	1	C
Women 15-24 years old with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS	72	44	14	9	1	1	C
6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years	59	36	35	21	24	15	C

Millennium Development Goals indicators	*Countries with at least 1 data point*		*Countries with at least 2 data points*		*Countries with at least 1 data point before 2000 and 1 data point after 2000*		*Nature of data*[a]
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	
6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets	49	30	29	18	2	1	C
6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate antimalarial drugs	54	33	34	21	5	3	C
7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances							
Consumption of all ozone-depleting substances in ODP metric tons	137	84	137	84	137	84	C
Consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs in ODP metric tons	137	84	137	84	137	84	C
7.5 Proportion of total water resources used	116	71	61	37	57	35	C
7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest	155	95	155	95	155	95	C
6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS)							
Tuberculosis treatment success rate under DOTS	148	91	147	90	129	79	C
CA = country adjusted							
5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	140	86	129	79	108	66	CA
5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)							
Antenatal care coverage, at least one visit	119	73	101	62	83	51	CA
6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs	90	55	89	55	0	0	CA
8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services	104	64	104	64	96	59	CA
E = estimated							
1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed	112	69	112	69	112	69	E
1.5 Employment-to-population ratio	126	77	126	77	126	77	E
4.1 Under-5 mortality rate	138	85	138	85	138	85	E
4.2 Infant mortality rate	138	85	138	85	138	85	E
4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles	139	85	139	85	136	83	E
6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years	101	62	101	62	0	0	E
7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected	157	96	157	96	155	95	E
7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source	142	87	142	87	137	84	E
7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility	137	84	137	84	131	80	E
7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums	108	66	105	64	105	64	E
6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS)							
Tuberculosis detection rate under DOTS	149	91	146	90	124	76	E
M = modelled							
5.1 Maternal mortality ratio	120	74	0	0	0	0	M

Millennium Development Goals indicators	*Countries with at least 1 data point*		*Countries with at least 2 data points*		*Countries with at least 1 data point before 2000 and 1 data point after 2000*		*Nature of data*[a]
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	
6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis							
Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	156	96	156	96	156	96	M
Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population	156	96	156	96	156	96	M
Tuberculosis death rate per 100,000 population	156	96	156	96	156	96	M
G = global monitoring data							
1.1 Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day	89	55	67	41	66	40	G
1.2 Poverty gap ratio	89	55	67	41	66	40	G
1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption	94	58	66	40	64	39	G
1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day	85	52	64	39	63	39	G
1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption	124	76	124	76	124	76	G
7.2 Carbon dioxide emissions, total, per capita and per $1 GDP (PPP)	152	93	152	93	151	93	G
NA = not available							
8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population	157	96	157	96	156	96	NA
8.15 Cellular subscribers per 100 population	157	96	157	96	157	96	NA
8.16 Internet users per 100 population	157	96	153	94	150	92	NA
Indicators related to ODA from the 22 donor countries							
C = country data							
8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income							
Net ODA as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income	22	100	22	100	22	100	C
Net ODA to least developed countries as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income	22	100	22	100	22	100	C
8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)	22	100	22	100	21	95	C
8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied	22	100	22	100	20	91	C
8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product	7	32	7	32	7	32	C
8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity	21	95	21	95	0	0	C
Indicators related to the 31 landlocked developing countries							
C = country data							
8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes	31	100	31	100	30	97	C

Millennium Development Goals indicators	Countries with at least 1 data point		Countries with at least 2 data points		Countries with at least 1 data point before 2000 and 1 data point after 2000		Nature of data[a]
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Indicators related to the 52 small island developing States							
C = country data							
8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes	35	67	35	67	31	60	C
Indicators related to 40 eligible HIPC initiative countries							
G = global monitoring data							
8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)	40	100					G
8.11 Debt relief committed under the HIPC initiative and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative[b]							
Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative (cumulative)	35	88					G
Debt relief delivered in full under Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (cumulative)	24	60					G

[a] The coding of the nature of the data is as follows:
C = country data. The figure is the one produced and disseminated by the country (including data adjusted by the country to meet international standards).
CA = country adjusted. The figure is the one produced and provided by the country, but adjusted by the international agency for international comparability — that is to comply with internationally agreed standards, definitions and classifications (age group, International Standard Classification of Education, etc.).
E = estimated. The figure is estimated by the international agency, when corresponding country data on a specific year or set of years are not available, or when multiple sources exist, or there are issues of data quality. Estimates are based on national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources but on the same variable being estimated.
M = modelled. The figure is modelled by the agency when there is a complete lack of data on the variable being estimated. The model is based on a set of covariates — other variables for which data are available and that can explain the phenomenon.
G = global monitoring data. The figure is regularly produced by the designated agency for the global monitoring, based on country data. However, there is no corresponding figure at the country level, because the indicator is defined for international monitoring only (example: population below $1 a day).
NA = not available. The nature of the data is unknown or was not provided.

[b] Data on the cumulative debt relief committed is updated every year.

United Nations E/CN.3/2010/16

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2009
English
Original: Spanish

Statistical Commission
Forty-first session
23-26 February 2010
Item 3 (m) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: regional statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Statistical Commission is invited to comment on the report and endorse the proposed course of action.

* E/CN.3/2010/1.

09-64329 (E) 311209 060110

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	State of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean	3
	A. Availability of statistical information	3
	B. Development of statistical information in selected areas	4
	C. Organization of statistical systems in the countries of the region	12
III.	Regional coordination	13
	A. Brief history	13
	B. The Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	14
	C. Subregional coordination mechanisms	16
IV.	Main challenges and strategies for the development of statistics in the region	18
	A. Main challenges	18
	B. The strategy of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the role of the Statistical Conference of the Americas in meeting challenges	20
V.	Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission	21

Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean

I. Introduction

1. This document was prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and offers a description of the main trends in the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean and the principal challenges in that regard.[1]

2. The first chapter provides an analysis of the state of development of statistical production in the region, based on statistical information for 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries and eight specific areas. The institutional organization of national statistical systems in the region is also described. Chapter II examines the history and current status of mechanisms for regional and subregional coordination and of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. Chapter III describes the main challenges for official statistics in the countries of the region and the strategies that the Statistical Conference of the Americas and ECLAC propose to implement in order to address them.

II. State of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean

A. Availability of statistical information

3. Latin America and the Caribbean is a very geographically diverse region, with significant cultural differences between countries, as well as differences in size. For the purposes of this report, the region is considered to comprise the countries of South and Central America (including Spanish-speaking island countries), those of the Caribbean (including English- and Dutch-speaking island countries, as well as Guyana and Suriname) and Mexico. Table 1 shows the current status of statistical production in the region in six key areas.

[1] The information on vital statistics, education statistics, ICT statistics and subregional coordination was prepared with the involvement of the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America, the Caribbean Community, the Central American Statistical Commission of the Central American Integration System, the Andean Statistics Committee and the Southern Common Market.

Table 1
Availability of statistical information for 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

		Countries which have carried out a census in the last 10 years		*Existence of a programme of regular employment surveys or multi-purpose surveys*		*Countries whose national accounts base year dates back no more than 10 years*		*Countries that have published environmental statistics*		*Countries that have published ICT statistics*	
	Total	*No.*	*Percentage of the total*	*No.*	*Percentage of the total*	*No.*	*Percentage of the total*	*No.*	*Percentage of the total*	*No.*	*Percentage of the total*
Caribbean	13	13	100	3	23	2	15	—		—	
Latin America	20	19	95	16	80	8	40	14	70	16	80
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	32	97	19	58	10	30	14	42	16	48

Source: ECLAC, based on national data.

4. Table 1 shows that 97 per cent of Latin American and Caribbean countries have conducted a population census in the last 10 years. Some 80 per cent of Latin American countries run a programme of regular household surveys; 40 per cent have national accounts with a base year dating back no more than 10 years; and 35 per cent have a comprehensive vital statistics system. In the areas of the environment and information and communication technologies (ICT), 70 per cent and 80 per cent of the countries, respectively, publish statistics. As might be expected, there are significant differences between geographical areas. The Caribbean countries have made less progress, except in the area of censuses.

B. Development of statistical information in selected areas

Population censuses

5. According to the established schedules, 16 of the 20 Latin American countries and 20 Caribbean countries will conduct their population and housing censuses for the 2010 round between 2010 and 2012. In the most recent census rounds, progress has been made in incorporating new variables of major importance to the region, such as migration, ethnic origin and African descent. Furthermore, some countries have gained experience in using new information and communication technologies, including data capture in the field through the large-scale use of hand-held data capture devices and optical reading of census questionnaire content, and the automatic coding of occupational categories and other variables. Significant progress has also be made in harmonizing the census variables used in different countries, especially through the work undertaken within the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and by Chile and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

6. The region has also made considerable advances in its use of census data, facilitated by the development of REDATAM (REtrieval of DATa for small Areas by Microcomputer) software. A total of 13 Latin American and 4 Caribbean countries currently allow online census data processing over the Internet. These developments have enabled better use to be made of census data for public policy and research purposes. The opportunity to access specialized databases that allow comparison of

some or even all the countries of the region is another milestone in the dissemination and use of census information in Latin America.

Household surveys

7. Programmes of regular multi-purpose household surveys, or at least employment surveys, are now conducted in nearly all Latin American countries. Over the course of the 1990s and the current decade, these surveys have been gradually strengthened and improved in a number of areas, including their geographical coverage, the quality of survey tools and samples, and the technologies used in each stage of the process. Many Caribbean countries have conducted at least one multi-purpose survey, employment survey or survey of living conditions in recent years, although only three of them run programmes of regular household surveys.

Table 2
Latin America and the Caribbean: household surveys 2000-2009

Countries	*Existence of a programme of regular employment or multi-purpose surveys*	*Date of last survey*				
		Income and expenditure surveys	*Surveys of living conditions*	*Population and/or health surveys*	*Surveys on disability*	*Child labour surveys*
North America and Central America						
Costa Rica	X	2004-2005				2001
Cuba	X		2009			
El Salvador	X	2004-2005			2004	2001
Guatemala			2006		2005	2000
Honduras	X		2004	2005	2002	2002
Mexico	X	2008[a]		2006		2007
Nicaragua		2007	2005	2006	2003	2000
Panama	X	2007-2008	2008		2005	2005
Dominican Republic	X	2006-2007		2007		2000
Caribbean						
Jamaica	X					
Santa Lucia	X					
Trinidad and Tobago	X					

Countries	*Existence of a programme of regular employment or multi-purpose surveys*	*Date of last survey*				
		Income and expenditure surveys	*Surveys of living conditions*	*Population and/or health surveys*	*Surveys on disability*	*Child labour surveys*
South America						
Argentina	X	2004-2005				
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	X	2003-2004	2008	2008	2001	2004
Brazil	X	2002-2003				2008
Colombia	X	2006-2007	2007	2005		2001
Chile	X	2006-2007	2006			2001
Ecuador	X	2005-2006	2005-2006		2004	2004
Paraguay	X	2005-2006			2004	2006
Peru	X	2009	2009	2009		2007
Uruguay	X	2005-2006			2003	2003
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	X	2004-2005		2009		2000

Source: ECLAC, based on national data.

[a] In the period 2000-2008, Mexico conducted five income and expenditure surveys.

8. The region has also gained experience in conducting income and expenditure surveys. Table 2 shows that nearly all countries have conducted at least one such survey in the current decade. Some Caribbean countries have also recently conducted income and expenditure surveys, although their capacity to do so regularly has been more limited.

9. The progress made in the area of household surveys has been achieved as a result of major efforts by the countries, supported by contributions from such donor agencies as the Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI), a joint undertaking of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). ECLAC has a long tradition of providing countries with regular support in this area, through technical assistance and capacity-building missions, as well as the promotion of forums for discussion and exchange of experiences. The International Labour Organization (ILO) also collaborates through its work on the measurement of labour indicators.

National accounts and economic statistics

10. Considerable progress towards implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA) has been made since 2001. Eighteen new countries have adopted the recommendations, bringing to 22 the total number that now use

that methodology as a framework for calculating their macroeconomic statistics.[2] Nonetheless, most countries in the region do not yet have a full set of estimated tables.

11. The most significant achievements have been recorded in the area of origin and use of goods and services and in the calculation of gross domestic product (GDP) by components of expenditure (although only 12 countries have supply and use tables for periods after 2000 and only 10 publish them). Eight countries publish institutional sector accounts, and only two countries have begun preparing balance sheets of assets and liabilities for institutional sectors. With regard to institutional sector accounts, non-financial corporations, households and non-profit institutions pose the greatest difficulties, and adequate information is not always available for general government. Concerning quarterly estimates, little more than half of the countries in the region have systems to track quarterly macroeconomic data on GDP by sector and by expenditure. Even fewer have experience in producing what are known as extensions to the central framework: few countries have satellite accounts for tourism, the environment and other specific fields such as health, education and culture.

Gender statistics

12. A growing number of Latin American countries have systems of gender indicators, while the others have embarked on major processes to compile information on gender disparities and disaggregate data by sex (see table 3). Significant progress has also been made on the implementation of time-use measurements; since 2001, 18 time-use surveys have been conducted.

Table 3
Advances in gender indicator systems at the national level

Country	*Type of information*	*Inter-agency agreements*
Argentina	National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) gender indicators	
Brazil	National Gender Information System/Gender Equality Observatory	Between the Special Department for Women's Policies of the Office of the President of the Republic, the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute and other public-sector institutions
Chile	Gender statistics from 1992-2002 censuses online	

[2] See "América Latina y el Caribe: Series históricas de estadísticas económicas 1950-2008", Cuadernos Estadísticos 37 (Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009); available at http://www.eclac.cl/deype/cuaderno37/index.htm.

Country	*Type of information*	*Inter-agency agreements*
Colombia	Gender Affairs Observatory (Act 1009 of 2006)	
Costa Rica	Preliminary proposal for a gender indicator system	Between the National Institute of Statistics and Census and the National Institute of Women
Cuba	Database with available information	Between the Federation of Cuban Women and the National Statistical Office
Ecuador	System of social indicators on the situation of women and gender inequalities (SIMUJERES) within Ecuador's integrated system of social indicators	Between the National Women's Council and the National Statistics and Census Institute
El Salvador	Integration of a gender perspective in the sixth national population census and the fifth housing census, held in 2007	Between the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses and the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development
Guatemala	System of indicators for gender analysis	Between the National Statistical Institute and the Department of Women's Affairs of the Office of the President
Haiti	Inclusion of gender indicators in national surveys	Between the Ministry for the Status of Women and Women's Rights and the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information
Honduras	National system of information on women and girls	Between the National Statistical Institute and the National Institute of Women (INAM), with the cooperation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and through the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC
Mexico	System of indicators for monitoring the status of women in Mexico	Between the National Statistics and Geography Institute (INEGI) and the National Institute of Women (INMUJERES)

Country	*Type of information*	*Inter-agency agreements*
Nicaragua	System of gender-based indicators	Between the Nicaraguan Institute of Women and the National Statistics and Census Institute
Panama	System of gender-based indicators	Network of public and civil society agencies that produce and use statistical information
Paraguay		Agreement being prepared between the Department of Women's Affairs and the Department of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses
Peru	Sector statistics with gender indicators — National Strategic Plan for Statistical Development (PENDES) 2008-2012	Between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the National Institute of Statistics and Information
Dominican Republic	Women's Observatory	Between the Department of Women's Affairs and the National Statistical Institute for the production of gender statistics
Uruguay	Gender Information System	
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)		Between the National Institute of Women (INAMUJER) and the National Statistical Institute

Source: ECLAC, based on national data.

13. Cooperation between producers and users of gender statistics — especially between the national statistical offices, national mechanisms for the advancement of women and a growing number of sector ministries — has been gradually institutionalized in most countries.

14. In May 1999, ECLAC prepared a system of gender indicators for the follow-up and evaluation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001, and the Beijing Platform for Action. By coordinating the establishment of the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean as a bridge between users and producers of gender statistics, ECLAC has implemented the mandate of the Statistical Conference of the Americas jointly with the mandate established by the Quito Consensus.

15. There are, however, information gaps with respect to particular population groups, either because the sources are not representative enough to disaggregate at those levels or the questionnaires or statistical records do not include questions that

identify members of those groups. This makes it difficult to measure gender gaps by ethnic identity, disability and migrant, refugee or displaced status, among others.

Vital statistics

16. All countries have vital statistics systems that regularly produce data on births and deaths, but there are coverage and quality issues. In 7 of the 25 countries for which information is available, coverage is good (over 85 per cent of births and deaths) throughout the national territory, while another seven countries have coverage levels of roughly 50 per cent. Quality issues, however, are more common to all the countries. Lack of information about the age of mothers, children's birth weight, place of residence, socio-economic characteristics of the parties (parents of newborn or stillborn babies, deceased adults), or imprecise or non-existent information about cause of death impede countries' understanding of the true levels of risk and incidence of disease, and hinder the formulation of epidemiological mortality profiles.

17. As regards morbidity statistics, resources and services, there are substantial differences between the countries of the region. Low coverage in some geographical areas and fields, such as social security or the private sector, is a common problem that prevents the compilation of comprehensive, accurate and reliable information for formulating health policy.

18. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has prepared a plan of action for strengthening vital and health statistics, aimed at addressing and overcoming these limitations. The plan has already produced results: a majority of countries involved have used the diagnostic tools proposed in the plan, and a number of countries have formulated strategic plans for strengthening vital statistics and health data systems.

Education statistics

19. During the current decade, the majority of countries in the region have significantly improved their production of education statistics and indicators and have been able to overcome the main shortcomings that previously existed: the persistent lack of basic information, isolation of education statistics units from decision-making processes, little use of the information produced, lack of venues for exchanging standardized information and methodologies and lack of institutional leadership at the regional and international levels. The spread of low-cost information and communications technology was one of the contributing factors. A role was also played by new projects on internationally comparable education indicators for monitoring the commitments undertaken by the international community, such as the Education for All programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, and the creation in 1999 of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), which is responsible for overseeing the production of official education statistics within the United Nations system and the international community.

20. The developments described above are reflected in the availability of several key indicators for monitoring the MDGs, as shown in table 4.

Table 4
Coverage of key indicators for monitoring MDGs in education (weighted by covered population), 2009 annual survey

Net enrolment ratio in primary education (percentage)*	*Index of parity between the sexes in the gross enrolment ratios (percentage)***		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Tertiary*
91	95	95	82

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).
* Official indicator for monitoring Goal 2 of the MDGs.
** Indicators used for monitoring Goal 3 of the MDGs.

21. In addition to the new challenges posed by the demands of the sector, some of the previous issues persist. In light of this fact, there are several ongoing initiatives providing training and assistance for national technical teams, including a UIS initiative which coordinates its efforts with other agencies operating in the region.

Environmental statistics

22. Considerable progress has been made in the current decade in institutionalizing environmental statistics. By 2008, 21 countries had programmes on environmental statistics, while 14 of the 28 national entities had a unit dedicated solely to that issue. Sixteen countries had environmental statistics publications.

23. This progress demonstrates the growing importance of environmental statistics in the region, which translates into a higher degree of institutional development, particularly for national statistical offices. There are still significant gaps, however. Firstly, environmental statistics units or programmes in the statistical offices should be strengthened and provided with appropriate financial and human resources. There is also a low level of collaboration between statistical offices and environmental ministries or departments and insufficient training of existing human resources. Lastly, it is very important to promote use of the definitions, concepts and classifications found in the system of integrated environmental and economic accounting as a conceptual framework for developing basic statistics.

Statistics on information and communications technologies (ICT)

24. In recent years there has been significant progress in the production of harmonized statistics and indicators on ICT access and usage. In 2004, only 15 countries in Latin America had indicators on Internet access and three had indicators on Internet usage based on information from household surveys, while those numbers have now increased to 18 and 15, respectively. This type of information is less readily available in the Caribbean, given that in 2004, only two countries had indicators on Internet access and the same number had indicators on Internet usage. Those figures are now six and five, respectively. Eleven countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have incorporated questions on ICT in business surveys and in more than half of the countries statistics on these technologies are a regular part of surveys conducted by the national statistical offices.

25. This process has received significant support from the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC).[3]

26. One factor that has facilitated this progress has been the approval by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC of the compendium of practices. OSILAC is currently reviewing the 2009 version of the compendium, and has noted that 20 countries in the region (15 in Latin America and 5 in the Caribbean) have adopted at least one indicator on ICT access and one on ICT usage from among the indicators suggested by the Observatory. The Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, in collaboration with OSILAC, is developing a regional proposal on key indicators for education and e-government.

C. Organization of statistical systems in the countries of the region

27. Most statistical systems in Latin America and the Caribbean are organized around a national statistical office,[4] which is usually created under a special law or as part of legislation on statistical functions in the country. Most national statistical systems are decentralized as regards the production and dissemination of statistics and centralized as regards normative aspects, with the national statistical office issuing guidelines and steering the system as a whole.

28. According to the results of a recent self-assessment survey on best statistical practices, to which 19 countries responded, the following are some of the characteristics of national statistical systems:[5]

(a) In 100 per cent of cases, the mandate to compile data for the production of statistics is specified under the law and statistical secrecy is guaranteed in national legislation;

(b) In 84 per cent of cases, statistical offices have a strategic or long-term plan for surveys (five years or more);

(c) In 42 per cent of cases, the head of the statistical office is appointed through a public competitive recruitment process;

(d) In nine cases, the head of the statistical office is a senior civil servant (non-political), and in two countries that person is a government minister.

29. In that connection, the Statistical Conference of the Americas has described some of the weaknesses of national statistical systems as follows:[6]

(a) In many countries of the region, the coverage, quality and transparency of national statistics are still not at the level of best international practices, which means that they cannot be used as a basis for developing a reputation for excellence for official statistics among users, economic stakeholders, social actors and decision makers;

---

[3] See www.eclac.cl/tic/flash.

[4] Only two countries in Latin America have departments or divisions responsible for producing and disseminating statistics within a ministry.

[5] Report on the development and adoption of the Code of Good Practice in Statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.3075(CEA.5/13).

[6] See 2005-2015, strategic plan, in document LC/L.2575/Rev.1 of 22 December 2006.

(b) In some cases, national statistical offices of the region lack an adequate institutional and legal framework;

(c) In many cases, the statistical offices operate without sufficient information technology and human and financial resources.

30. In recent years, significant changes have been implemented which reflect the institutional strengthening of national statistical systems. The transformation of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) into a fully autonomous institution governed by a board of directors appointed by the President of the Republic and the Senate, and backed by a statistical law that allows it to effectively exercise its lead role throughout the national statistical system, is an extraordinary achievement and a very encouraging example for the development of statistics in the region. The introduction in some countries of publicly managed systems in which senior management positions in statistical offices are filled through a competitive recruitment mechanism is also noteworthy.

31. Nevertheless, the serious institutional weaknesses that persist and the lack of sustainability of these processes in a number of countries present significant challenges. Technical capacities must therefore be increased and greater independence given to budgetary management. The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC has taken up this call and, with the collaboration of ECLAC and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), is driving forward the project to prepare a code of good practice in statistics.

III. Regional coordination

A. Brief history

32. The efforts made by Governments and specialized agencies to improve the regional coordination of official statistics date back several decades. The Inter-American Statistical Institute was established in 1940. A major landmark was the creation by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1950 of the Inter-American Statistical Conference as one of its specialized conferences. The Conference met on a regular basis until 1996 with collaboration from the Institute.

33. The first technical meeting of directors of statistics of Latin America and the Caribbean was organized by ECLAC in 1989, thus meeting the need for a technical forum for the heads of statistical offices at a time when the Inter-American Statistical Conference of OAS was facing serious financial problems. In the end, on 17 September 1998, the OAS Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development decided to discontinue the Inter-American Statistical Conference and urged the member States of OAS to pursue their coordination efforts in the field of statistics through a single entity within the framework of ECLAC.

B. The Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

34. The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC is a subsidiary body of ECLAC and has the following objectives according to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/7:

(a) Promote the development and improvement of national statistics and work to ensure that they are comparable internationally, bearing in mind the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the specialized agencies and other relevant organizations;

(b) Promote international, regional and bilateral cooperation among national offices and international and regional agencies;

(c) Draw up a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities to meet the demands of the countries of the region, subject to the availability of resources.

35. Conferences are held twice a year and meetings of the executive committee, comprised of representatives of seven member States of ECLAC,[7] are held in the periods between. Members of the executive committee serve two-year terms and their main function is to promote and monitor the implementation of the agreements reached at the conference. A biennial programme of work is established for each cycle and in 2005 agreement was reached on a strategic plan for the period 2005-2015, which provides the framework for the biennial programmes. According to the strategic plan, the main challenges for national statistical systems in the region between now and 2015 lie in developing an appropriate information system for monitoring progress towards achievement of the MDGs, preparing and conducting the 2010 round of population censuses, and implementing the System of National Accounts (2008) in all the countries of the region.

36. A number of representatives of countries and regional and international organizations take part in the working groups that have been established to implement the provisions of the strategic plan and many of the activities in the biennial programmes. ECLAC or another organization usually provides secretariat support for the working groups. In some cases, resources are provided by certain agencies and/or under projects that are drawn up within the framework of the Conference and then submitted to donor agencies for funding. The following working groups are currently operating:

(a) *Working Group on Censuses*. This Group undertakes support activities for the countries of the region in preparation for the 2010 census round. Exchanges of experience have been organized and progress has been made in harmonizing some of the census variables. Meetings were held, for example, on measuring people's ethnic origin, internal and international migration and other forms of territorial mobility, and operational aspects of cartography. Funding has been made available for these activities by IDB and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);

[7] A number of ECLAC member States are not from Latin America or the Caribbean. They play an active role in the conference and some are members or have been members of the executive committee.

(b) *Working Group on Institution-building*. This Group has been working on promoting the harmonization of social statistics, for which it has received funding from IDB. At the fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, it was decided that the Group should focus its activities on preparing, with support from ECLAC and EUROSTAT, a proposal for a code of good statistical practices for Latin America and the Caribbean on promoting the use of international standards;

(c) *Working Group on Gender Statistics*. The work of this Group focuses on three areas: (i) the development of capacities to produce high-quality gender statistics; (ii) the strengthening of ties between the producers and users of gender statistics; and (iii) the promotion of international development cooperation and the dissemination of gender statistics. It has promoted exchanges of experiences, discussions on common definitions and/or approaches, technical assistance and training in matters such as time-use surveys, statistics on violence against women and household satellite accounts (with regard to measuring the contribution of unpaid work). It receives support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and from ECLAC, as the technical secretariat;

(d) *Working Group on Migration and Trends in Remittances*. This Group has looked into the methods used in the region to measure international remittances and has analysed ways to improve these procedures. It has headed an IDB-financed project that has facilitated the Group's work;

(e) *Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals*. This Group has geared its work towards analysing the definitions and methodologies of the indicators that have been established for monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. It has focused on analysing the differences that tend to arise between the estimates made by countries and those made by international organizations. An agenda is being drawn up for bringing about the reconciliation of these differences. The Group has also promoted greater participation of national statistical offices in the preparation of national reports on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. This Group has received financial support for its activities from IDB and ECLAC, as the technical secretariat.

(f) *Working Group on National Accounts*. The Group carries out activities to improve the basic economic statistics and estimates used in national accounts in the region. It has performed a diagnosis of the current situation and drawn up a set of proposals for creating a programme to link the activities carried out by countries and international agencies, with a view to addressing the difficulties encountered in producing primary economic data. ECLAC acts as the technical secretariat;

(g) *Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies*. The Group serves as a discussion forum on the measurement of access to and use of information and communications technologies, and seeks to contribute to the development of their comparability at the regional level. The Group has closely coordinated its activities with OSILAC. It has also undertaken activities to further the discussion and dissemination of proposals made at the global level and to generate awareness of the experiences of developing countries;

(h) One important initiative was the transformation of the Working Group on Human Resource Education and Training into the Knowledge Transfer Network. The Network is a collaborative system that includes the various training centres of

the national statistical offices and other resources available to support training, and works to coordinate, promote and disseminate statistical training activities that are of interest to statistics officials in the region. For this purpose, it has set up a board of directors and a basic coordinating unit, financed partially by the World Bank and is located in the offices of INEGI in Mexico. Organizational and financial support for the Network's activities has been provided by the National Statistics Institute of Spain;

(i) *Working Group on Environmental Statistics*. This Group was formed recently and aims to promote the regular production of environmental statistics in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean through the dissemination of experiences from outside the region and the exchange of national experiences within it. It is supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and by ECLAC as the technical secretariat;

(j) *Working Group on Poverty*. This Group, which was created at the most recent Conference, aims to further the harmonization of the methodology used to measure poverty in terms of income in the region. Using the proposed new methodology that is to be completed by ECLAC by early 2010 and the methods used by several countries to produce their national estimates, the Group will put forward a set of recommendations to improve the interregional comparability of measurements.

37. In order to facilitate and promote inter-agency coordination and cooperation and to optimize their contribution to capacity-building in national statistical systems, the Conference has developed, through ECLAC, a database of statistical cooperation activities carried out by international organizations in the region, classified by subject area and organization.[8]

C. Subregional coordination mechanisms

Statistics development in MERCOSUR[9]

38. MERCOSUR, which has been in existence for almost two decades, has been promoting the development, harmonization, validation and dissemination of statistical information among its member countries. In the work leading up to the first Convention on Statistics, for example, the directors of the national statistical institutes of MERCOSUR (including Chile) signed a framework agreement on the coordination and harmonization of statistics in which they affirmed their willingness to proceed with the harmonization of statistics in different fields. There is no common statistics policy, however, for guiding statistics activities in accordance with the needs of the regional integration process. Nor is there an institutional structure for statistics in MERCOSUR, which means that there are no commonly applied norms.

39. The cooperation received from the European Union since 1998 has facilitated statistical harmonization activities. These include regional and itinerant workshops, meetings (usually biannual), local and international technical assistance, internships

[8] See http://websie.eclac.cl/StatisticalActivities/index.asp.

[9] The member countries of MERCOSUR are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, while Chile is an associate member and participates in several aspects of statistical coordination.

and studies. Various working groups have been set up. These consist of experts and officials from national statistical institutes and/or central banks of the region that work in the same area, and they are each responsible for presenting progress reports on their area.

40. The harmonization of the statistical output of the member States of MERCOSUR is facing some difficulties, mainly owing to inequalities in the availability of resources, the lack of prior experience in statistical harmonization within an integration process and unfavourable environment caused by the absence of a common institutional framework for statistics.

The Statistical Commission of the Central American Integration System (SICA)

41. The Statistical Commission of SICA was set up as an international cooperation initiative promoted by the directors and managers of the statistics and census offices of Central America.

42. The constitution of the Central American Statistical Commission of SICA (CENTROESTAD) was signed at the thirty-third Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA in late 2008.

43. The objectives of CENTROESTAD are to: (a) facilitate the development of a regional statistical system; (b) generate up-to-date and timely regional statistical information based on information provided by national and regional institutions; and (c) standardize methodologies and definitions to allow for the comparability and aggregation of statistical data in Central America and the Dominican Republic, in keeping with international principles and in accordance with universally applied procedures and techniques.

44. The member countries are already carrying out preliminary coordination activities such as the drafting of the regulations of CENTROESTAD and the preparation of a 2009-2011 pluriannual plan based on the seven areas of integration. The purpose of the plan is to address the requirements of the various departments and specialized institutions that make up SICA for indicators and statistics and thus assist them in their regional decision-making.

The Andean Statistics Committee[10]

45. The Andean Statistics Committee is the permanent technical support and advisory body to the Commission or General Secretariat of the Andean Community and is responsible for issuing non-binding technical opinions on issues related to community statistics. The goal of the Committee is to foster improvements in economic, social, demographic and environmental statistics and to harmonize concepts, definitions, minimum contents, methodologies and their presentation.

46. The Committee comprises the highest authorities of the national statistical systems of member countries. The presidency is held by the highest authority of the national statistical office of the country that assumes the presidency of the Andean Presidential Council. There is a statistical office in the General Secretariat of the Andean Community.

[10] The member countries are Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

47. The Committee has a Community Statistics Programme for the period 2008-2013, which sets out a strategic vision of the statistics that are to be produced throughout the Community during that period in response to the demands of the Andean integration process.

48. The Andean Community has developed community legislation on statistics, consisting of decisions and resolutions that have the status of supranational laws on social, economic and environmental statistics, manuals, nomenclature, directories and other matters.

49. In addition, the Andean Centre for Training in Statistics has been established as a coordination mechanism and national statistics training centres have been set up as the executing agencies for training programmes and policy.

The Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

50. When CARICOM was established in 1973, a formal mechanism for statistical coordination, the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians, was created. The Committee meets annually and its membership is comprised of all the directors of statistics of the CARICOM member countries.

51. The Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians was initially established to monitor intraregional trade and to build national capacities for the generation of foreign trade statistics. This limited mandate was subsequently broadened to include coordination tasks in areas such as national accounts, population and housing censuses, social and gender statistics and, more recently, environmental statistics.

52. The statistics programme of the CARICOM secretariat, which provides technical support to the Standing Committee, also carries out tasks aimed at coordinating and promoting statistics activities in the subregion in a number of the fields mentioned in paragraph 51.

IV. Main challenges and strategies for the development of statistics in the region

A. Main challenges

53. Over the next several years, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will face various challenges in developing the production and dissemination of official statistics. Although these challenges affect the region as a whole, they do not affect its various countries in the same way or with the same impact, given the significant differences between the levels of development achieved by their national statistical systems.

Statistical production

54. *Census data.* Exploiting census information continues to be a challenge because users are increasingly demanding higher levels of disaggregation, greater precision and the georeferencing of data, especially at the local level. These challenges share a common problem, namely, the region-wide shortage at all levels of human resources trained in demography and population and development studies.

Attempts are being made to make up for this shortfall with isolated initiatives and limited financial resources, in the absence of a coordinated regional strategy.

55. *Vital statistics*. The main priority is to implement an action plan aimed at rapidly increasing the coverage of vital statistics records, along with improving the quality of the data collected, especially as regards the mother's age, the child's birth weight, place of residence and the socioeconomic characteristics of the persons involved in the demographic event.

56. *Household surveys*. Despite the major advances made, challenges remain in the areas of institution-building and the sustainability of household survey programmes, especially in the Caribbean, as well as in technical areas such as the design and implementation of surveys and the analytical capacity of statistical institutions. Factors such as institutional weakness, lack of resources to drive statistical development, and staff turnover seem to conspire against this objective. Also, most countries do not yet apply the Integrated Household Survey System concept.

57. *National accounts and economic statistics*. The availability and quality of basic statistics for preparing accounts for goods and services present serious challenges in many countries. In recent years, priority has been given to sector-specific surveys rather than to economic censuses because of cost considerations and ease of processing. This indicates the need for directories of production units covering the entire formal production system. The broad range of informal or unstructured production units poses an additional difficulty since it is particularly complicated to capture their transactions. The adoption of the *2008 System of National Accounts (SNA)* represents a new challenge for the countries of the region and highlights the need to redouble efforts to implement the *1993 SNA* definitively and to modernize national account systems. The increase in the production of short-term indicators and their timely dissemination is another immediate challenge to be met.

58. *Gender statistics*. The greatest challenges facing the countries of the region involve statistical information in key areas, such as the participation of women at all levels of decision-making, poverty with a gender perspective, paid and unpaid work performed by women, time use, and violence against women. This is particularly true of the Caribbean countries. Moreover, major information gaps exist with respect to certain population groups, which makes it difficult to identify gender gaps by ethnic identity or by disability, migrant, refugee or displaced person status, among others.

59. *Education statistics*. It is necessary to improve data on private educational institutions, teachers, education spending, early childhood education and higher education, as well as to increase the availability of metadata. There is also a need for analytical reports that explain and interpret the information produced, for the integration of different sources of information in education — particularly in human resources, investment and knowledge assessment — and for the development of policies to disseminate the information produced. Other important objectives include improving institutional integration between ministries of education and statistical institutes, and strengthening and training the human resources involved in statistical processes.

60. *Environmental statistics*. The availability and quality of environmental data need to be improved, and environmental data compiled and systematically processed in official statistical series. To achieve this, capacity-building programmes need to be established, which requires developing metadata and methodological documents, and strengthening inter-institutional mechanisms.

61. *Statistics on information and communications technologies*. There are two main challenges in this area. The first is to increase efforts to compile statistics on ICT access and usage. This requires further strengthening of technical assistance and capacity-building programmes, especially in countries that have yet to adopt the system of harmonized ICT measurements and those that have not incorporated the internationally recommended key indicators. It is also necessary to promote the use of statistical information in formulating and evaluating ICT policies and in diagnostic studies and decision-making.

Dissemination and interaction with users

62. A major challenge is to improve and expand the dissemination of available statistics and indicators geared both to specialists and to the public at large, and generalizing the use of digital media and the Internet are vital to achieving this goal. This is closely related to another priority in this area, which is to increase the use of available data and statistics for the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

63. Promoting dialogue between the producers and users of statistics is key to improving the quality, relevance and use of official statistics in the region. Fostering such a dialogue will also help to increase awareness among policymakers of the need to strengthen national statistical systems.

National statistical systems

64. Strengthening the legal and institutional framework of national statistical systems continues to be an important priority for many countries of the region. This will allow professional independence and self-management capabilities at statistical offices to be strengthened.

65. In addition, it is vital to provide statistical offices with the human, financial and technological resources they need to meet their objectives and goals. In many countries, not only does the amount of resources available to statistical offices need to be increased, but budgetary sustainability also needs to be ensured. This would allow them to design and implement medium- and long-term programmes while relying on a core professional and technical staff to help improve the quality of official statistics.

B. The strategy of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and role of the Statistical Conference of the Americas in meeting challenges

66. The ECLAC statistical programme is guided by a three-pronged strategy: (i) promoting best practices in statistics and disseminating and adapting international standards; (ii) providing assistance aimed at strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of the region's statistical systems; and (iii) development of

methodologies. These lines of action are coordinated with the 2005-2015 strategic plan of the Conference, for which ECLAC acts as the technical secretariat.

67. ECLAC carries out a variety of specific activities to achieve progress in the above areas. These activities take into account the thematic priorities established by the Conference. ECLAC has been providing ongoing support to countries in the conduct of population censuses, regular programmes of household surveys and gender and national accounts statistics, among other areas. To this end, it undertakes technical assistance missions and organizes training courses and technical meetings, with the active participation of representatives from the countries concerned. In all of these activities, the Commission cooperates closely with other international agencies working in these areas and promotes horizontal assistance among the countries, given the different levels of statistical development in Latin American and Caribbean countries. In terms of the development of methodologies, ECLAC has continued its work on developing methods for measuring poverty and social cohesion that are appropriate to the region. ECLAC also implements or supports programmes that are global in scope. For example, it has been involved in international efforts to improve the indicators used to monitor progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and it will be coordinating the price-comparison activities of the International Comparison Programme.

68. The establishment of a code of good practices adapted to the realities of the region is another central aspect of the strategy pursued by the Conference and by ECLAC. This objective is central to the concerns of this strategy, which is to advocate that Governments give greater priority to the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework and provide increased funding for statistical development in the countries of the region.

V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

69. **The Commission may wish to:**

(a) **Comment on the measures being adopted by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to further the development of statistics, particularly their key achievements and most urgent issues;**

(b) **Comment on the role of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and on the 2005-2015 strategic plan;**

(c) **Make suggestions concerning the operation of the working groups;**

(d) **Advise on the challenge, for statistical offices, of raising the visibility and priority of official statistics in the public agendas of policymakers;**

(e) **Provide guidance on the strategy to promote and strengthen cooperation between the international agencies and organizations developing statistical programmes in the region.**